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ABSTRACT

American stereographs of the late 19th and early 20th centuries are discussed in the context of the Victorian stylized stereotype of women which they so graphically capture. Stereograph cards and early motion pictures from the Library of Congress were the major sources studied. Stereograph cards were as ubiquitous in their time as television is today. The images popularized in stereograph cards, and later adopted by the more public medium of the movies, made possible the visual realization of America's most pervasive and enduring stereotypes. The Victorian views of women emphasized a stereotype of domesticity, passivity, moral superiority, sexual purity, and motherly sanctity and sacrifice. Underlying this stereotype, however, was another perception of women as subtly sexual, having a sensuous underside to their nature that they used in a calculated way to appeal to the baser instincts in men. Borrowing from both of these perceptions, the stereotype of women illustrated in the stereograph cards can be described as both that of "Virgin and Vamp." Specific examples are discussed, and reproductions of the slides originally shown with the paper are appended. (RM)

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IMAGES OF WOMEN IN AMERICAN STEREOGRAPHS, 1870-1920

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Paper delivered at the Sixth Berkshire Conference

on the History of Women

held at Smith College June 1-3, 1984

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Note on Sources

The principal source for this paper is the extensive collection of stereograph cards in the Library of Congress Division of Prints and Photographs. The Library owns approximately 280,000 stereograph cards, about one-third of which are available for study either in roughly sorted and briefly described "lots" or as individual cards in subject-indexed files. A supplementary primary source material for this study was the collection of early motion pictures in the Library of Congress Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division. The most important films for this paper were in the "Paper Print Collection," films made between 1895 and 1910, then processed as a paper contact print of the original film and sent to LC as a method of meeting copyright requirements (only prints, not the film itself, could be copyrighted.) These have been painstakingly restored, modern 16mm safety film versions made, and the approximately 3000 titles synopsized and indexed in a guide.

Because my purpose is to show the images themselves, and discuss them in the context of the Victorian stylized "stereotype" of women which they so graphically capture, I have chosen not to footnote the text unless I am quoting directly from a source other than the stereograph cards themselves. What follows below is a list of those principal secondary sources which I relied on for background and supplemental information, organized by category.

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HISTORY OF STEREOGRAPH PHOTOGRAPHY AND CARDS

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_____. The World of Stereographs(Gettysburg, PA, 1977). Note: Darrah, a collector, is the most informed writer on the subject of stereographs, and this volume the best available history.

Earle, Edward, ed. Points of View: Stereographs in America, a Cultural History (Rochester, NY: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1979)

Gilbert, George, Photography: The Early Years, A Historical Guide for Collectors (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), chapter 8. "The Stereograph: The Paired Photographs of Parlor Travel," pp. 131-148.

Jenkins, Harold, Two Points of View, The History of the Parlor Stereoscope (Uniontown, PA, E. G. Warman Publishing Co., 1973) Originally published by World in Color Productions, Elmira, NY, 1957.

Sandler, Martin W., The Story of American Photography, an Illustrated History for Young People (Boston: Little Brown, 1979).

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EARLY MOTION PICTURES

Books:

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Sklar, Robert, Movie-Made America, A Social History of American

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Movies (New York: Random House, 1975).

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Musser, Charles, and Warren Light, "Before the Nickelodeon: The Early Cinema of Edwin S. Porter," (New York-Hollywood Feature Film Production, 1982).

VICTORIAN WOMEN: IMAGERY, DOMESTICITY, AND WORK EXPERIENCE

Banner, Lois W., American Beauty, A Social History Through Two Centuries of the American Idea, Ideal, and Image of the Beautiful Woman (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983).

Degler, Carl N., At Odds, Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present(New York: Oxford University Press, 1980)

Green, Harvey, with the assistance of Mary-Ellen Perry, The Light of the Home, An Intimate View of the Lives of Women in Victorian America (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983).

Kessler-Harris, Alice, Out to Work, A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

Tentler, Leslie Woodcock, Wage-Earning Women, Industrial Work and Family Life in the United States, 1900-1930 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

Wright, Gwendolyn, Building the Dream, A Social History of Housing in America (New York: Pantheon, 1981).

_____, Moralism and the Model Home, Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873-1913 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

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One of the conceits of modern life is the persistent belief of our contemporaries that their own perils, follies, and temptations are somehow more dreadful than those of any previous age. For today's vast ahistoric majority, the past, when dissociated from dull political and military statistics and focused instead on the lives of ordinary citizens, was a nostalgic period in which quaintly costumed people lived simple and virtuous lives. For my purposes here, the relevant aspect of this myth is family entertainment, untrammelled by such corrupting modern influences as television, VCR's, movies, or rock radio stations, brought the entire family together in their parlor (or, lacking a parlor, the kitchen), where mothers, fathers, and children read uplifting books like Little Women, played wholesome games, sang around the old piano, or did useful handwork.

What they really did was to look at stereograph cards. "I think there is no parlor in America where there is not a Stereoscope," wrote Dr. Hermann Vogel in 1883.[1] The collector William Darrah has estimated that between 1850 and 1930, twelve thousand photographers in the United States alone turned their hand to making perhaps as many as five million different stereograph views; while most of them produced only a few, fifty publishers churned out more than 10,000 apiece, and another

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1. Philadephia Photographer, 20 (1883), 282, quoted in Taft, Photography and the American Scene, p. 167.

2. Darrah, World of Stereographs, p. 6.

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stereographs were invented as early as 1838, and flourished in the 1850's and 1860's, produced another million and a half views.

Initially developed by Sir Charles Wheatstone to view a pair of similar drawings, the stereoscope was almost immediately adapted to the photographic process after its invention by Louis Daguerre in 1839. In vision, the human brain combines the separate images from two eyes, each with a slightly different perspective, the discrepancy providing a perception of depth. A stereoscopic viewer allows the artificial recreation of depth on a plane, a two-dimensional surface - and with it the illusion of three dimensional reality - by presenting simultaneously through two viewing lenses nearly identical separate drawn or photographic images for each eye, with the point of perception for each image differing by the same distance (about three and a half inches) as the space between the human eyes. The result is an image which seems to place the viewer virtually within the three-dimensional scene it captures.

The advent of photography coincided with the invention of a usable stereoscopic viewer. Every photographic process, from daguerreotype to modern 35mm color film, was adapted to produce stereographic images. Using cameras with twin lenses three inches and a half inches apart to produce dual images simultaneously, photographers responded rapidly to the lucrative business opportunities in providing stereoscopic views for the education and entertainment of a fascinated public. Paper

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stereograph, or "card views" were produced commercially in Europe before 1853; by 1858 the London Stereoscopic Company carried a trade list of 100,000 available titles, and shops in all the principal European tourist centers carried cards with souvenir views of their city.

The first European card views were offered for sale in New York in 1852. In Philadelphia, the Langenheim brothers imported foreign card views, and also pioneered in the production of American views with their American Stereoscopic Company, founded in 1853. The earliest subject matter was most often scenic: familiar and unfamiliar landscapes and streetscapes, both natural and manmade wonders literally from every corner of the globe, brought the world into the comfort of one's own parlor. Most Americans first saw the sweeping vistas of the west on stereograph views. Stereographs also could report graphically on great public events or disasters. Matthew Brady exhibited battlefield views of the Civil War in his studio in Washington to people who lined up to see in three dimensions the scene of the latest battle. Devastating fires in Portland, Maine (1866), Chicago (1871) and Boston (1872) appeared rapidly in the title-lists of the major stereoscopic publishers. Though early proponents and later advertisements of stereograph views waxed eloquent over their educational and informational potential, from the beginning, a great many view cards were also sold for entertainment and amusement. Usually described in the publishers' lists as "Comic" or "Sentimental" scenes, these were produced with actors (sometimes costumed) posed in inexpensive

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outdoor locations, or on indoor sets that ranged from crudely painted back drops to painstakingly elaborate recreations of Victorian domestic interiors.

The first successful stereoscopic viewers were bulky and awkward, and after the initial novelty, stereograph viewing languished until the invention in 1861 of a convenient hand-held viewer by one of stereography's most ardent champions. The American physician and author, Oliver Wendell Holmes, published a series of several articles on stereo photography in the Atlantic Monthly in 1859 and 1860. So fascinated was Holmes with the educational possibilities of stereographs that he called for "the creation of a comprehensive and systematic stereographic library where all men can find the special forms they particularly desire to see".[3] Holmes never patented his invention, which was further improved and manufactured by Joseph Bates of Boston; the Holmes-Bates viewer was widely reproduced, and remained the principal design used for home viewing of individual cards. Families with large collections or without the patience to pass viewer and card from hand to hand, could also purchase a table viewer that could be loaded with as many as fifty cards at a time fitted into a rotating wheel that allowed rapid viewing. Some of these could accommodate two persons looking at different views.

These Holmes-Bates viewers, costing as little as nineteen cents, were peddled door-to-door by salesmen, given away by sellers of the cards, or as premiums in contests, and eventually

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3. Quoted in Taft, Photography and the American Scene, p. 180.

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made their way into almost every middle-class American household. With their widespread distribution, a mass market for stereograph cards was created, and the boom in their production was underway. It spread in two waves, through creative choice of popular subject matter, innovative manufacturing, and marketing techniques that created the first mass market visual entertainment medium for the home. The first wave in the 1870's was made possible by mechanization techniques that allowed division of labor and conveyor-belt efficiency in developing, cutting, pasting, and drying the photographic images on the heavy cardboard stock. For instance, by 1872 the Kilburn Brothers plant in Littleton, New Hampshire, employing 52 persons, could turn out three thousand finished stereograph cards per day, or a million a year. Though the Kilburn brothers sent salesmen throughout New England, the demand for their product was created in part by the imaginative variety of their subject matter. They carried not only a vast array of scenic "travel" views from around the world, but also several thousand comic and sentimental views, either in "singles" or sets of from two to a dozen cards.

By 1880 the stereo craze was beginning to diminish in America when a quite different set of entrepreneurs revived it again. Ben and Elmer Underwood, aged 20 and 18, organized out of their Ottawa, Kansas headquarters a system for selling stereographs that generated a mass market demand for the three-dimensional images in every town of any size in the country. Recruiting seminarians and college students to promote their product door-to-door, the Underwoods originated the idea of

marketing boxed sets of 100 or 200 views with accompanying instruction manuals and maps. Training their salesmen carefully in good manners and pleasing sobriety, insisting that they attend church and make friends of leaders of the communities in which they sold their views, Underwood & Underwood solicited enthusiastic endorsements of their boxed sets of educational stereo views as visual aids from such diverse authorities as Abbott Lowell, president of Harvard, and Pope Pius X. Sets on Biblical subjects were promoted in churches; principals or school superintendants were given demonstrations; and return visits to a neighborhood were made every three or four months to show the newest stock of views. The brothers expanded, eventually moved their headquarters to New York, and acquired the rights to publish views from the negatives of smaller companies. By 1901, the company was producing 25,000 cards a day, seven million a year. To view the cards, Underwood and Underwood annually manufactured and marketed 300,000 stereoscopes. Their products were also advertised and distributed through the Sears, Roebuck and Company catalogue. Underwood methods were widely copied by other manufacturers, most notably the Keystone View Company, founded in 1892. Keystone became the leader in the stereographic field after Underwood & Underwood expanded into news photography in 1910, abandoning production of stereographs by 1920. Keystone continued to produce views until the second world war, and by 1940 had produced over 40,000 commercial titles.

In short, stereograph cards and the images on them were as ubiquitous in their time as television is in ours. Moreover,

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when motion pictures began to appear in 1895, first in the peep-show viewer "Kinetoscope," then in life-size screened projections, potential customers for the new form of mass visual information were already well-versed in visual imagery, used to seeing distant points of the world in a three dimensional reali , from which motion was but another short step forward, and familiar with the creative use of actors and photography to portray scenes and tell stories. Visual information had already been widely distributed with two distinct and sometimes conflicting purposes: entertainment and education. Three-dimensional stereographic and two-dimensional moving pictures developed side by side for the next quarter of a century, one in the privacy of the home, the other in public theatres and amusement places, borrowing themes, plots, visual conventions, and occasionally even publishers back and forth, until the popularity of the stereograph faded after the first World War. Stereographs shaped not only the way that two generations saw the world, they prepared the way for extended twentieth century cultural use of artificially created and manipulated realistic imagery in both public and private entertainment.

The images popularized in stereograph cards, and later adopted by the more public medium of the movies, made possible the visual realization of America's most pervasive and enduring stereotypes. The figurative use of the word "stereotype" is routinely attributed to the word's original technical use in printing, in which a plaster mold of a printing surface enabled

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printers to make one or several casts of that surface in cheaper metals: a "stereotype" is hence anything repeated or reproduced without variation, anything conforming to a fixed or general pattern and undistinguished by individual marks, as if produced from a stereotype."[4] But the relatively slow emergence of the figurative use of the word until after the advent of the stereograph suggests to me that, in common parlance, stereograph typologies BECAME the source of meaning for "Stereotypes."[5]

What then are the stereotypes - the images - of women in this important medium, at a time when women were beginning to test the limits of their domestic sphere, to break out in a number of important ways into the larger world around them? The Victorian views of women emphasized a stereotype of domesticity, of passivity, of moral superiority, sexual purity, and motherly sanctity and sacrifice. Recent literature on the reform movements of the late nineteenth century, the period of these stereographic photographs, has argued that even many of the women who broke out of a strictly domestic environment did so by emphasizing that they were using "the unique qualities with which

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4. Webster's New International Edition, 2nd edition.

5. The Oxford English Dictionary gives figurative meanings only for the post-1850 period, although the printing technology that supposedly inspired it was invented by Didot in 1798. Figurative use in the modern sense seems to begin in the 1870's, in the heyday of the stereograph image.

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they believed the feminine temperament was endowed" to domesticate their larger society.[6] Other recent work has suggested however, that underlying this stereotype was another perception of women as subtly sexual, having a sensuous underside to their nature that they used in a calculated way to appeal to the baser instincts in men.[7] Borrowing from both of these perceptions, the stereotype of women endlessly illustrated in the carefully created images in the stereograph cards, can be described as both that of "Virgin and Vamp." The "virgin become virtuous mother" image was strongest in the category of entertaining stereograph subjects known collectively as "Sentimentals." The earliest of these found a ready audience, especially the "Gems of American Life" series of single cards marketed by F. G. Weller. The modest young beauty, in stereographs, could trace her appeal to the "steel-engraving lady," the "fragile and submissive maiden" personified in such fashion magazines as Godey's Lady's Book.[8]

Series of slides:

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6. Jill Conway, "Women Reformers and American Culture, 1870-1930," Journal of Social History, 5 (1972), 166. See also Mary P. Ryan, Womanhood in America, chap. 4, pp. 198-210; Carl N. Degler, At Odds, chap. 13, pp. 298-327.

7. See particularly Lois W. Banner on the fascination of both men and women during this period with actresses and chorus girls in American Beauty, especially chapts. 6 and 7 on "The Voluptuous Woman," pp. 106-153.

8. Ibid., p. 44.

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1. "American Beauties - Hattie Chase" - Stuber, 1871
2. "The Proposal" - Stuber, 1871
3. "Shall I Say Yes?" - Stuber 1871
4. "Ready for a Walk" -Stuber, 1871
5. "Writing an Invitation" - Stuber, 1871

When the novelty of three dimensions had worn off, however, beauty-as-fashion-plate no longer was enough to sell stereograph cards, and the "demure young woman" became increasingly more daring. The photographic images show much more of her, and her activities are more frivolous. Instead of going on walks, she goes to balls. Popular series of cards used "getting ready for the ball" or "after the ball" as an excuse for showing slender young women in various stages of undress(most of them terribly chaste by modern standards!), often posed before mirrors to enable the viewer to enjoy the scene from all angles. Other young beauties went to the beach, where their bathing costumes allowed an even better view of their figures.

Series of slides:

1. "Before the Ball" B. W. Kilburn, 1897
2. "The New Slippers," - William H. Rau, 1900
3. "Reflections" - William H. Rau, 1900
4. "After the Opera, Preparing to Retire" - William H. Rau, 1900
5. "(Heart)-Breakers along the Seashore" - Underwood & Underwood, 1897

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Not all images of young beauties were virginal and chaste, of course. But though titillating cards such as these were probably hidden from women and children, they still, despite the nudity of the models, reflect some of the innocence of the stereotype of passive Victorian womanhood. Contrast these quality glamour photos of 1900 with the much more cheaply produced, overtly sexual overtones of the 1920s images that follow.

Series of slides:

1. "The Soul of Gayety" - copyright 1901
2. "Sisters" - Copyright 1902, H. C. White Company
3. "Naughty But Nice" - Ex. Sup. Co., 1923
4. "Oh Kay" - Ex. Sup. Co. 1927

The ambition of every Victorian young lady, of course, was marriage, and the stereographs celebrated the ceremony that initiated marriage. Weddings were one of the most popular series, offered by almost every mass-production publisher of stereo cards. The following are chosen from among ten different series in the Library of Congress collections. So popular were stereograph wedding series that early movie makers copied the stages of action in the genre quite literally, adding only a humorous episode of the groom haplessly struggling unassisted to get ready and get himself to the ceremony.

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Series of slides:

1. "The Proposal" - H. C. White Co. 1902 (Note: this is the same company that made "Sisters," above)
2. "Decorating for the Wedding" - C. H. Graves, 1897
3. "Dressing the Bride" - 1907
4. "The Wedding" - R. Y. Young, 1900.
5. "Toast to the Bride" - International View Company, 1905.
6. Slide from movie, "The Wedding" - American Mutoscope & Biograph Company, 1905

A wedding and a groom might be the goals that the "American Beauty" sought to reach, but the bride's true destiny, in the Victorian stereotype, was motherhood. Childrearing was the ultimate sanctification of domesticity, and a mother nurturing her infant its most hallowed scene. Though these images might have an erotic purpose as well as an uplifting one, it is significant that this is one of the few instances I found in which a Black woman was portrayed in a non-comic scene with a dignity equal to that of her white counterpart.

Series of slides:

1. "A Free Lunch" George Barker, 1898
2. "Baby's Happy Hour" - Griffith and Griffith, 1897.

No Xeroxes of slides

Motherhood meant much more than nurturing an infant, of course.

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Series of slides:

1. "The Young Housekeeper - Dusting the Parlor" - F. L. Stuber - Gems of American Life 1870
2. "Helping Mama" - F. G. Weller - 1871
3. "Mama, Where Was I when you was a little Girl?" Griswold's Compositions - 1871
4. "Unveiling Statue of Young America" Griswold's Compositions, 1871
5. "Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep" - Melander - 1876
6. "Bedtime" - Keystone View Company, 1924

Mothers even continued to fulfill their protective maternal function after death, in the spirit world imagery made possible by the exposure times of late 19th century photography.

Series of slides:

1. "Their Mother's Grave" - Melander, 1870
2. "The Angel Visitant" - 1896, Northwestern View Company

No Kelomes of slides

Though "Sentimental" subjects had a wide popularity, the most telling illustrations of "Stereo-Types" of women are found in another genre, the "Comic" titles, either in single-card humorous subjects or in cartoon-like series of images. The earliest humorous subjects focused on courtship, and here both the "sentimental" images of innocent girl and saintly mother received a new twist. Young beauties deceived their mothers (and

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fathers too) to encourage the attention of young men. Mothers not only guarded, but interfered in the lives of their daughters. The predicaments of both the not-so-innocent daughter (particularly after 1900) and the spoil-sport mother provided the basis for amusement. If men were also the victims of this humor, it was their wives and daughters whose pretensions to respectability, honor, or virtue were shown to be a hilarious sham.

Series of slides:

1. "The Intercepted Letter" - F. G. Weller, 1876
2. "Do Let Me Sew the Button On" - Melander, 1875
3. "Dad's Asleep, Ma's Out," Melander 1876
4. "[illegible]iss," and "Bliss Disturbed" - The Great Western View Co., 1896
5. "Mamma Nabs the Masher" - Keystone View Co., 1906, 12th of a series.

The idea of young ladies as innocents was given another setback in several comic series that allowed the camera into the bedrooms of disrobing beauties, and illustrated the contradictory ideas that weak young women were strong enough to overpower adventurous gentlemen.

Series of slides:

1. "Girls I Hear Rats" - B. W. Kilburn, 1892

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2. "Looking for a Man" - Griffith and Griffith, 1897
3. Series of 4:[1]"Discussing the Conquests of the Evening", [2]"A Rude Interruption - Horrors! A Man's Sneeze" [3] "A Merited Fate - 'Throw Him out of the Window Girls'" and [4] "A Doubtful Triumph" - American Stereoscopic Company - 1902

Marriage may have been women's triumph, and her contribution to the home the moral precepts of her own virtue, but the caricatures of the married state in stereograph cards conveyed another version of reality. Both in single cards, and in several extended series of 12 or 16 cards, under the punning title of "Robbing the Male", most major stereograph view firms published images of wives who acquired money (for purposes never specified in the stereo cards) by helping themselves from their husbands' pockets. So popular was this theme that it was incorporated into several early movies, often with some additional twists to prolong the humor.

Series of slides, all with title "Robbing the Male":

1. Great Western View Company, 1896
2. E. K. Faltz, 1897
3. T. W. Ingersoll, 1899
4. Variant title, [1]Male Robber at Work and [2]Male Robber Baffled" - Great Western View Company, 1903
5. "Getting Her Pin Money" - Berry, Kelly and Chadwick, 1907
6. Slide from movie, "The Trap Pick-pocket Detector, 1905

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Other humor derived from marital relations in the stereographs was bedroom farce too, but like that of the female pick-pocket carefully avoided sexual innuendo, drawing its humor from the ironies of stereotypes about womanly weakness, rather than her seductiveness.

Series of slides - "The Burglar," American Stereoscopic Company, 1903

1. "Oh John! I'm sure I heard a burglar!"
2. "You go first Mary; no man would hurt a good woman, and good men are scarce"
3. "Keep him covered Mary; I'll call the Police"
4. "I've taught that fellow a lesson - he won't come here again."

The most consistent humorous imagery in comic "husband and wife" stereograph cards is that attacking the effect on marriage of women's demand for their rights. Reforming women may not have agreed on which rights for women were most important to work toward: special protection or political participation. The stereograph, and later motion picture humor, didn't distinguish between female reformers and sufragettes, but it exploited male fears that any demands that enabled women would disable them. Beatrice Webb wrote after a visit to the reformers at Hull House that the women there were "strong-minded energetic women, bustling about their various enterprises and professions, interspersed with earnest-faced self-subordinating and

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mild-mannered men who slide from room to room apologetically." In an unbroken series from 1871 until after the passage of the nineteenth amendment, the stereograph views embody the stereotype of the activist woman as an emasculator, and her husband as weak and hen-pecked. The symbols of her renunciation of her own domesticity are usually a bicycle, sometimes bloomers. The symbols of the degradation of her mate are his relegation to domesticity in the most demeaning - or the most typical - of wifely tasks: doing the wash, sewing on his own buttons, minding the children, cooking the meals.

Series of slides:

1. "Women's Rights -[1]"The Rehearsal," [2] "Off to the lecture room" F. G. Weller, 1871
2. "Women's Rights - Wash Day" - (caption is also in Spanish) Underwood&Underwood, 1892
3. "Have Dinner at One, Dear" - Griffith and Griffith, 1897
4. "Sew on Your own Buttons, I'm Going for a Ride" -Keystone View Co., 1899
5. "Mind the Children, Finish the Washing, and have dinner at 12" - Whiting View Co., 1900
6. "The new woman - Wash Day" - Underwood & Underwood, 1901
7. "The Obedient Husband" (same theme - black actors! -

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9. Beatrice Webb's American Diary, p. 108, quoted in Conway, "Women Reformers," p. 173.

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Keystone View Co., 1901

8. "The 'New Man' on Blue Monday" (black actors) - Keystone, 1901.[10]

9. "Twentieth Century Washwoman" - 1905

Significantly, with the passage of a woman suffrage amendment, the imagery did not change, although the title did: now wifely refusal to fulfill her domestic duties was labelled "Why Men leave home" - E. S. Co., 1924.[11]

If the married woman who aspired to an independence through women's rights was comical, so too was the single woman who aspired to independence through work for pay. The first "working girl humor" was as much derived from the ethnic stereotypes of vaudeville and variety shows as from stereotypes of women. Servants, whether Irish washerwomen or French cooks, were clearly women of much resourcefulness, not to be trusted.

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10. With the exception of these rare Keystone cards, Black women seldom appeared as subjects in "Comic" stereographs where their feminine identity formed the source of the humor. Usually the even more demeaning stereotypes applied to the Negro overrode any use of the stereotype of being female.

11. Though I was assured by Library of Congress research specialists in the Motion Picture reading room that similar themes do occur in very early movies, the only ones I could find were a 1903 film "Everybody Works But Mother" which borrowed the washing analogy, and a 1916 slapstick farce, "The Sufferin Baby" on the perils of an infant left to its father's care by a Suffragette mother. Significantly, in a 1901 Edison film spoof on the activities of Carrie Nation, "Why Mr. Nation Wants a Divorce", her husband is forced to change and feed the baby while alone at night as the symbol of his ill-usage.

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Twelve card series, Underwood and Underwood, 1900, also found in most other major stereograph card publisher catalogues:

1. "Mr. and Mrs. Newlywed's New French Cook"
2. "Why You Little Beauty! How long have you been our cook?"
3. "You bashful little Creature!"
4. "Oh! you naughty man! "
5. "Footsteps - My Wife! Mum's the word!"
6. "Hands! Hands! What does she mean?"
7. "Good Heavens!"
8. "Ta ta!"
9. "The New French Cook"
10. "And they lived happily ever after."

The movement into offices of thousand of young women during and after the civil war brought new employment opportunities for middle-class daughters. Their place in the office "was assured when the typewriter came into general use in the 1890's. The machine required nimble fingers - presumably an attribute of women. . . . And the work was clean."[12] Here was another opportunity to stereotype working women. Like the French maid, the typist was suspect, and a fit subject of humor, principally because she was attractive, usually in the newer "Gibson girl," shirtwaisted, slender independent style of American beauty. In her independence she seemed too to have lost some of her adherence to proper behavior (although not necessarily her

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12. Alice Kessler-Harris, Out to Work, p. 148

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passivity.) How ironic that the source of humor in stereograph views of marital bliss is totally asexual - while that in women at work is based almost entirely on illicit sexual attraction. At the turn of the century, French cooks and office typists were not yet "vamps"; they did not deliberately seduce their married suitors, but neither did they resist the improper advances their looks and positions inspired.

Selection from fifteen card series, Berry, Kelly and Chadwick, 1907, also found in most other major stereograph card publisher catalogues:

- [4] "Ah Good morning Miss Mason"
- [7] "Now Little One, If you didn't get that sentence, I must be talking too fast."
- [9]"We'll let that Letter go Now, and think it out later."
- [10]"Pressing Business! You deceiptful wretch."
- [11] "You amorous little upstart, I'll teach you not to hug married men!"
- [14] "I'm glad you understand it now, darling, She was so terribly homesick."
- [15] "No more homesick girls for him. Wifey ordered a phonograph."

Movie-makers found the working women stereotypes equally as successful in translation to film as the asexual bedroom humor of the stereographs on marriage. The "French cook" theme inspired at least two movies, "Why Mrs. Jones Got a Divorce," made by

Edison in 1900, and "How the Cook Made her Mark," distributed by American Mutoscope and Biograph Company in 1904. But there is evidence too that the stereoscope publishers also borrowed usable plot lines from the movies - a 1902 delightful American Mutoscope and Biograph film of "The Typist" duplicates and predates most of the stereograph series on this theme. And one enterprising movie, made by AM&B in 1908, uses the comic possibilities of a sneaky youngster with a new camera in "Bobby's Camera" to bring all of the standard stereograph stereotypes of female misbehavior together in one reel: mother picking father's pocket, father kissing his secretary at the office, sister and her beau spooning in the parlor, and the cook in the kitchen embracing the neighborhood policeman with her floury hands!

Stereograph images played a role of transmitting through a mass medium culturally approved stereotypes that had many of the same hall-marks of "sexual politics" of some of the most popular of television series of our own day, with much of the same persuasive impact. They derived their power partly because they played on commonly-held assumptions, in this case, about the nature of women, and their proper place in society. But they exerted that power in part because they operated safely, without serious challenge, within the domestic realm that they sentimentalized or caricatured. It was in the parlor - the haven of domestic respectability, of female pride and propriety - that members of the family gathered to see the world through a pair of stereoscopic lenses. From the respectability gained in the parlor, the stereotyped images conveyed visually in stereographs

found a readier reception in the larger middle-class world than they might otherwise have enjoyed. If some of those images had been borrowed from public entertainment in the first place, they nevertheless returned to the new public arena of the movie theatres with a beguiling household familiarity. The "Movie-made America" images of women as virgin, virtuous wife, or vamp may have been nurtured in Hollywood - but they were born in the Victorian parlor, in the humble stereograph.

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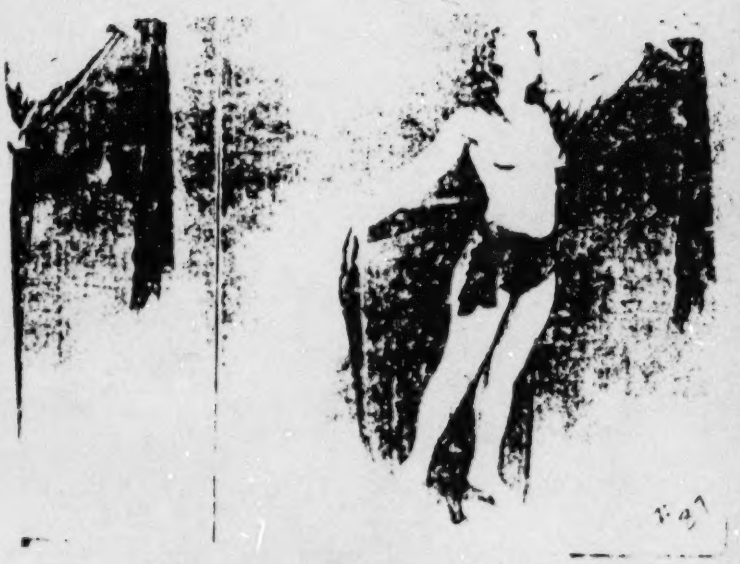

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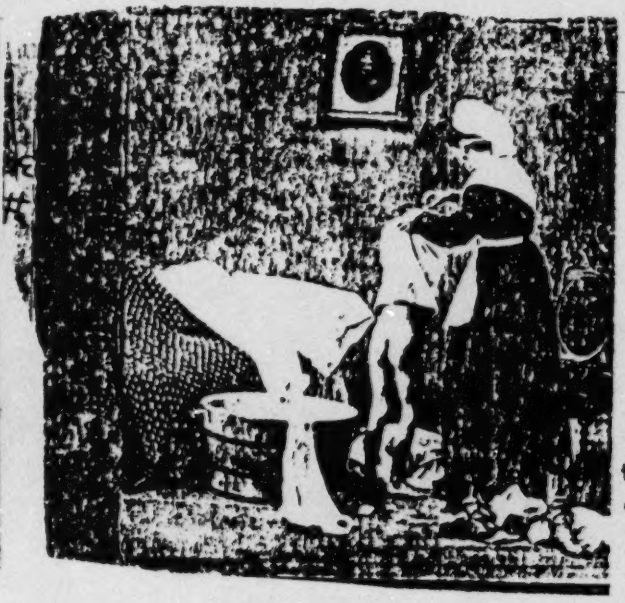

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STEREOSCOPIC GROUPS
PORTRAITS

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pp. 18-19

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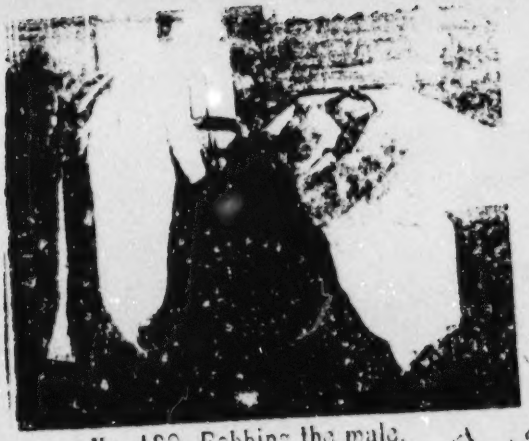

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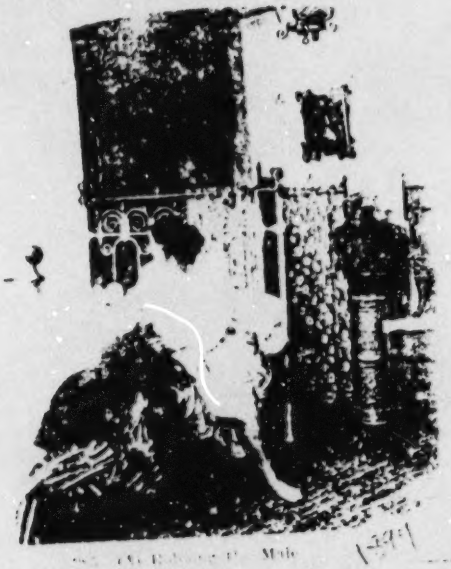

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p. 19

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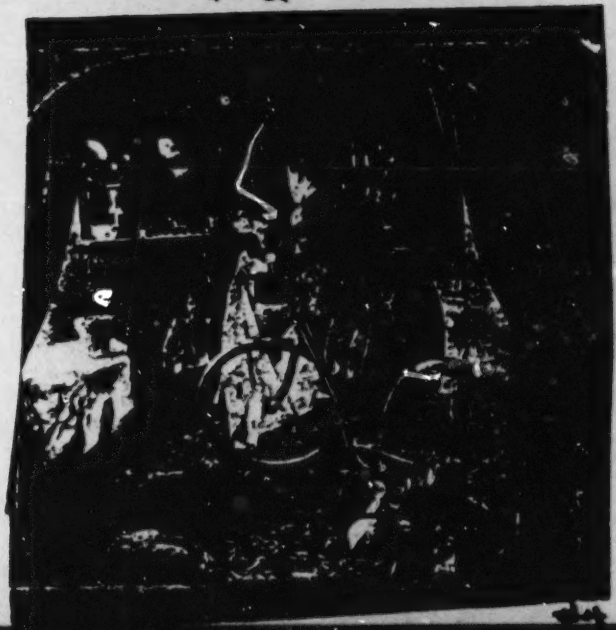

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pp. 21-22

#6

10447—The Obedient Husband. #117

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10448—The "New Man" on Blue Monday. #118

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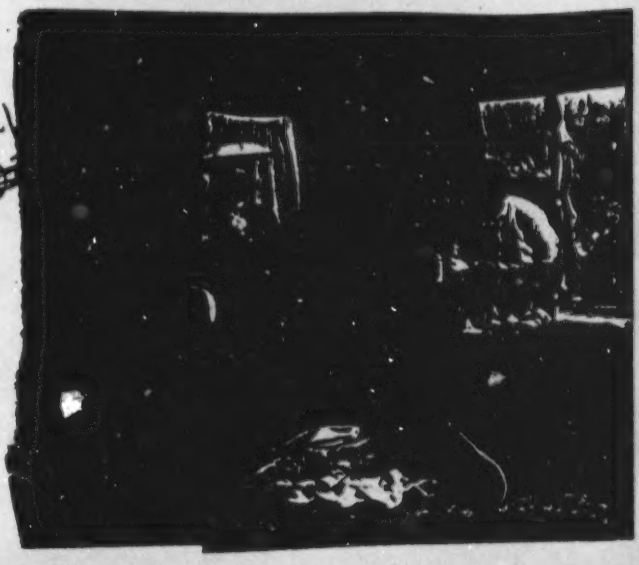

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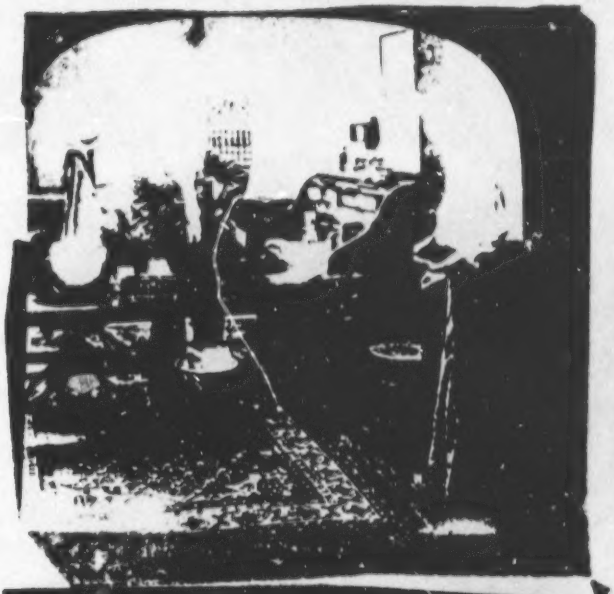
X 2/08 The Typewriter

THE NEW STENOGRAPHER

1. THE STENOGRAPHER

#93 P.23



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